

Moral Depravity

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A

SERMON

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The author of this discourse has no reason to believe, that the views which it contains, are in any essential respect diverse from those of his brethren, who heard it. That the general proposition will meet with the approbation of all who hold the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, he has no doubt. In regard to some of the more specific statements, he supposes that there is, in some limited degree, the semblance of controversy, rather than real diversity of opinion. It may be proper to remark, that he is not aware of any change in his own views on these points, since he entered the ministry; nor of any departure in any article of doctrinal belief, from his revered instructor in theology, the former President of the College. Facts however, which are extensively known, furnish it is believed, a sufficient apology for the selection of the topic, as well as for the publication, of the discourse.

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EPHESIANS 2:3.

And were by nature the children of wrath even as others.

The Bible is a plain book. It speaks, especially on the subject of sin, directly to human consciousness; and tells us beyond mistake, what sin is, and why we sin. In the text, the Apostle asserts the fact of the moral depravity of mankind, and assigns its cause. To be "the children of wrath" is to possess the character which deserves punishment; in other words, it is to be sinners, or to be entirely depraved in respect to moral character. The text then teaches; That The Entire Moral Depravity Of MANKIND IS BY NATURE.

In illustrating this position, I shall attempt to show, First, In what the moral depravity of man consists; and Secondly That this depravity is by nature.

I. By the moral depravity of mankind I intend generally, the entire sinfulness of their moral character, that state of the mind or heart to which guilt and the desert of wrath pertain. I may say then negatively,

This depravity does not consist in any essential attribute or property of the soul not in any thing created in man by his Maker. On this point, I need only ask, does God create in men a sinful nature, and damn them for the very nature he creates? Believe this, who can.

Nor does the moral depravity of men consist in a sinful nature, which they have corrupted by being one with Adam, and by acting in his act. To believe that I am one and the same being with another who existed thousands of years before I was born, and that by virtue of this identity I truly acted in his act, and am therefore as truly guilty of his sin as himself, to believe this, I must renounce the reason which my Maker has given me; I must believe it also, in face of the oath of God to its falsehood, entered upon the record. *Ezek. 18:3,4.

Nor does the moral depravity of men consist in any constitutional propensities of their nature. Whoever supposed himself or others to be guilty, for being hungry or thirsty after long abstinence from food or drink; or merely for desiring knowledge, or the esteem of his fellow-men, or any other good, abstractly from any choice to gratify such desires? Who does

not know that a perfectly holy man must be subject to all these propensities? The man Christ Jesus was subject to every one of them, for he "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Nor does any degree of excitement in these propensities or desires, not resulting in choice, constitute moral depravity. Suppose them then, in the providence of God; excited in any degree, and yet the man to prefer doing the will of God to their gratification; all will admit that it is the noblest act of obedience conceivable in a moral being. All will agree, that the man, who always triumphs over excited propensity, who duly subordinates all his desires of inferior good to the will of God, is a perfect man. It is the uniform sentiment of inspired truth, that this ruling of the spirit, this government of himself, imparts unrivalled glory to his character. We add the express declaration of the Apostle; "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation."

Nor does the moral depravity of men consist in any disposition or tendency to sin, which is the cause of all sin. It is important on this point to guard against error from the ambiguity of terms. There is an obvious distinction between a disposition or tendency to sin, which is prior to all sin, and a sinful disposition. I am not saying then, that there is not, what with entire propriety may be called a disposition or tendency to sin, which is the cause of all sin; nor that there is not, as a consequence of this disposition or tendency, what with equal propriety may be called a sinful disposition, which is the true cause of all other sin, itself excepted. But I say, that that which is the cause of all sin, is not itself sin. The cause of all sin itself sin! Whence then came the first sin? Do you say, from a previous sin as its cause? Then you say, there is a sin before the first sin. Our first parents and fallen angels were once holy. Tell us now, when became their first sin? Do you still repeat, from a previous sin? And what sort of philosophy, reason or common sense, is this a sin before the first sin sin before all sin? Do you say there must be difficulties in theology? I ask must there be nonsense in theology?*

*The embarrassment which in some minds attends this part of the subject, seems to result from the different senses in which the word disposition is used. That this word, like most others, is used in different senses, is undeniable; sometimes denoting simply tendency or bias, and sometimes, the moral temper, the governing affection or predominant inclination of the mind. The manner of its use, however, if correct, always

shews in which sense it is used. Thus if we speak of a disposition to sin, in the way of accounting for all sin, the case shews that we use the word simply in the sense of tendency, or as Edwards says, "a prevailing liableness or exposedness to such an event." For by the very mode of speaking, the disposition and the sin are so distinguished as to shew that we cannot mean, that the disposition is itself sin; it being spoken of as the cause of all sin. But if we speak of a sinful or wicked disposition, or a worldly disposition, or an avaricious disposition, or of a disposition as the cause of specific sinful acts, or if in any other way, we imply its sinfulness by our mode of speaking, then the predicate shews that we intend a state of mind which includes preference, a supreme or governing affection of the heart. Such, it is supposed beyond all question, is the *usus loquendi*; a due attention to which would have saved some theologians from no trivial amount of absurdity.

The question then still recurs, what is this moral depravity for which man deserves the wrath of God? I answer it is man's own act, consisting in a free choice of some object rather than God, as his chief good; or a free preference of the world and of worldly good, to the will and glory of God.

In support of these views of the subject, I now appeal to the testimony of some of the ablest divines, of Apostles, and of common sense.

Says Calvin, speaking of our text, "our nature is there characterized, not as it was created by God, but as it was vitiated in Adam; because it would be unreasonable to make God the author of death."¹ Again, "natural depravity is not a substantial property originally innate, but can be imputed to none but man himself." -He says of sin expressly, "it is voluntary." "If they are convicted of any fault, the Lord justly reproaches them with their own perverseness." "He who sins necessarily, sins no less voluntarily."²

The Westminster divines say, that "every sin both original and actual being a transgression of the righteous law of God &c." I ask, is not transgression, action? is it not something done, and done knowingly and voluntarily?

Dr. Bellamy, speaking of the sinful propensities of man, says "they are not created by God with the essence of the soul, but result from its native choice, or rather, more strictly, are themselves its native choice They are not natural in the same sense in which the faculties of our souls are; for

they are not the workmanship of God but are our native choice, and the voluntary, free, spontaneous bent of our hearts."³

1. Lib. II. C. ii. §. 6.

2. Lib. II. C v.

3. Works, Vol. I, p. 202.

Says President Edwards, "The inferior principles of self-love and natural appetite which were given only to serve, (and which as he also says, 'were in man in innocence') being alone and left to themselves became reigning principles. Man did set up himself (which by the way was doing something) and the objects of his private affections and appetites as supreme, and so they took the place of God. Man's love to his own honour, private interest and pleasure which was before wholly subordinate unto love to God and regard to his glory, (and while thus, he says also, 'all things were in excellent order and in their proper and perfect state,') now disposes him to pursue those objects without regard to God's honour or law." Thus he adds, "it is easy to give an account, how total corruption of heart should follow without God's putting any evil into his heart, or implanting any bad principle, or infusing any corrupt taint, and so becoming the author of depravity."¹ Again, he says, "If the essence of virtuousness or fault does not lie in the nature of the dispositions or acts of the mind, then it is certain, it lies no where at all." "That which makes vice hateful is a certain deformity in that evil will, which is the soul of all vice." "If a thing be from us, and not from our choice, it has not the nature of blame-worthiness or ill-desert."²

1. Works, Vol. VI, pp. 427 431.

2. Works, Vol. V, p. 220, et passim. Vide also, Vol. IV, pp. 12 16.

What says St. Paul? In the context he describes the nature of human depravity, and I request you to mark the agreement between his description and that of the last named author. He says "ye, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein ye walked." You see it was a walking living death. Dead as they were, they did something; "Wherein ye walked according to the course of this world." And what is the course of this world? What is it, but as Edwards says, "Men setting up themselves and the objects of their private affections as supreme, so that these things take the place of God?" What is it, but a world loving the creature more than God the Creator, and acting accordingly.-- Again says this

Apostle, "Among whom we all had our conversation " our deportment and manner of life, "in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind." Now what is this, but freely and voluntarily yielding to propensities, which men ought to restrain and govern, and to subordinate to the will of God; what is it but propensities rising into a free preference of their objects, and going out into a free purpose of self-gratification? For how can men walk in the lusts of the flesh and fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind without preferring the gratification of these lusts and desires to other good? How live and act thus, without choosing to do it? You see then that the sin, which the Apostle describes consists not merely in external action, nor merely in having propensities for natural good, but in acting freely, in yielding to these propensities as a matter of choice and preference.

What saith St. James? "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God," (and was there ever a more fatal tempter than God, if he creates sin in us?) "for God is not tempted of evil neither tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then, when lust, i. e. strong desire (the same word used by Paul when he says 'I have a desire to depart, &c.' and by our Lord when he says 'with desire have I desired to eat this passover') then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin." Now when does lust or strong desire conceive and bring forth sin? When it rises into a preference of its object, and goes out in action to secure its own gratification Or, if you say the lust is itself the sin, (though I think this is ascribing to the Apostle the absurdity of asserting sin before sin,) yet be it so. What then is the lust which is sin, but a preference of its object, a stronger affection for it than for God? Interpret then the language of the Apostle either way, and you come to the same result, that all sin consists in freely preferring some inferior good to God. I might add to these many other passages. I only ask what is the import of the most common terms used by Apostles to describe sin in its true nature? I refer to such as these, minding the flesh, walking in the flesh, living after the flesh, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, what is this, but freely, voluntarily setting up the gratification of our natural propensities and appetites as our chief good, fixing our supreme affections upon it, setting the heart, when the living God claims it, upon some inferior good?

I now enquire, what says Common Sense? Take then any action which

common sense in the common use of language, calls a sinful action, what is the sin of it? As an example, take the act of murder. Now do we mean by this term in common usage, to denote simply the external act of killing? Clearly not. This may be by accident, or, in obedience to a divine law. Do we mean simply the external act, together with the specific volition, to perform the act? Clearly not; for there must be such a volition, though the act were performed in obedience to a divine command. It is only when the circumstances and manner of the action evince a selfish or malicious purpose, a state of mind in which the perpetrator of the deed shows a preference of some private selfish interest to the life of a fellow-being, and to the will of God, that we call it murder. So true is it, that we regard this state of mind as constituting the sin of the action, that could we ascertain independently of external action, the existence of such a preference, we should, as the Bible does, pronounce it murder. This preference then of some private interest, object or end, rather than God, common sense decides to be the sin of all that we call sinful action, and strictly speaking, the sum total of all sin.

But common sense decides the question in another form. And here we come to what I regard as the turning point of the whole controversy. So far as I know, the only argument in support of the opinion, that sin pertains to something which is not preference, is based in a supposed decision of common sense. The decision claimed is, that all particular or specific sins, as fraud, falsehood, injustice, unbelief, envy, pride, revenge, result from a wicked heart, from a sinful disposition, as the cause or source of such sinful acts. To this fact, I yield unqualified assent, as "the dictate of the universal sense & reason of mankind," and by this universal judgment, I wish the present question to be decided. Let us then look at the fact in its full force and just application. There is a man then, whose course of life is wholly that of a worldling, his heart and hand shut against human woe, living without prayer, without gratitude, unmindful of God, and rejecting the Saviour of men, devising all, purposing all, doing all, for the sake of this world.-- Why is it? You say, and all say, and say right, it is owing to his love of the world to his worldly disposition to a heart set on the world.

Now while all say this, and are right in saying it, we have one simple question to decide, viz. what do all mean by it? Every child can answer. Every child knows that the meaning is, that this man does freely and

voluntarily fix his affection on worldly good, in preference to God; that the man has chosen the world as his chief good, his portion, his God. He knows that this is what is meant by a worldly heart, a worldly disposition, which leads to all other sins. So when we ascribe the sins of the miser to his avaricious disposition, we mean his supreme love of money; or the crimes of the hero or conqueror to his ambitious disposition, we mean his supreme love of fame, a state of mind which involves preference for its object. And whatever previous tendency, or if you will, previous disposition, there is to this state of mind; this state of mind itself and not any previous thing as the cause of it, is the wicked heart the sinful disposition of men. They love the creature more than the Creator, when they can and ought to love the Creator most. This forbidden choice of worldly good, this preference of the low and sordid pleasures of the earth to God and his glory this love of the world which excludes the love of the Father, this is man's depravity. This is that evil treasure of the heart, from which proceed evil things; this is the fountain, the source of all other abominations man's free, voluntary preference of the world as his chief good, amid the revealed glories of a perfect God.

Having attempted to show in what the moral depravity of man consists, I now proceed to show:--

II. That this depravity is by nature. This I understand the Apostle to assert when he says, "and were by nature the children of wrath."

What then are we to understand, when it is said that mankind are depraved by nature? I answer that such is their nature, that they will sin and only sin in all the appropriate circumstances of their being.

To bring this part of the subject distinctly before the mind, it may be well to remark, that the question between the Calvinists and the Arminians on the point is this whether the depravity or sinfulness of mankind is truly and properly ascribed to their nature or to their circumstances of temptation? And since, as it must be confessed, there can no more be sin without circumstances of temptation, than there can be sin without a nature to be tempted, why ascribe sin exclusively to nature? I answer, it is truly and properly ascribed to nature, and not to circumstances, because all mankind sin in all the appropriate circumstances of their being. For all the world ascribe an effect to the nature of a thing, when no possible change in its appropriate circumstances will change the effect;

or when the effect is uniformly the same in all its appropriate circumstances. To illustrate this by an example: Suppose a tree, which in one soil bears only bad fruit. Change its circumstances, transplant it to another soil, and it bears very good fruit. Now we say, and all would say, the fact that it bore bad fruit was owing to its situation, to its circumstances; for by changing its circumstances, you have changed its fruit. Suppose now another tree, which bears bad fruit place it where you will; change its situation from one soil to another, dig about it and dung it, cultivate it to perfection -do what you will, it still bears bad fruit only. Now every one says, the fact is owing to the nature of the tree, -the cause is in the tree, in its nature and not in its circumstances. So of mankind, change their circumstances as you may; place them where you will within the limits of their being; do what you will to prevent the consequence, you have one uniform result, entire moral depravity. No change of condition, no increase of light nor of motives, no instructions nor warnings, no any thing, within the appropriate circumstances of their being, changes the result. Unless there be some interposition, which is not included in these circumstances, unless something be done which is above nature, the case is hopeless. Place a human being any where within the appropriate limits and scenes of his immortal existence, and such is his nature, that he will be a depraved sinner.

When therefore I say that mankind are entirely depraved by nature, I do not mean that their nature is itself sinful, nor that their nature is the physical or efficient cause of their sinning; but I mean that their nature is the occasion, or reason of their sinning; that such is their nature, that in all the appropriate circumstances of their being, they will sin and only sin.

Of this fact, I now proceed to offer some of the proofs.

1. I allege the text. It is here to be remarked, that the Apostle does not say, nor can he mean, that the nature of man is itself sinful. He is assigning the cause of all sin, and says it is by nature. If you say that he teaches that the nature itself is sinful, then as the cause must precede its effect, you charge him with the absurdity of asserting that there is sin, before sin.

The Apostle doubtless conforms his phraseology to common usage, and must mean just what every plain man, using the same language in any similar case would mean. His language too, must be understood with

such restrictions as the nature of the subject and correct usage require. How then do we understand one another when using such language? We say the lion by nature eats flesh; the ox by nature eats grass; the tree by nature bears bad fruit; and so in a thousand cases. Now we mean by this-- this, that the nature of the thing is such, that uniformly in all its circumstances, it will be the cause or occasion of that which we assert; that the lion, for example, is of such a nature that he will eat flesh. So when the Apostle asserts, that mankind are by nature sinners, he must mean simply that such is their nature that uniformly in all the appropriate circumstances of their being, they will sin. He can no more mean that the nature itself is sinful, than we can mean in the example, that the nature of the lion is the same thing as the act of eating flesh, of which it is the cause. Still less can we suppose him to authorise the inference that the act of man in sinning, is not in some most important respects widely different from the act of a lion in eating flesh; so different that the one is sin, and the other not. This difference, the known nature of sin obliges us to suppose, it is intended not to deny, but to assume. The resemblance is simply in the certainty of the two things, and that which occasions this certainty; though in every other respect, especially in regard to the moral freedom and moral relations of man, the very nature of the acts spoken of, and the mode in which the certainty of them is occasioned, they are so diverse that the one is a moral act and has all the requisites of a moral act; the other cannot be a moral act.*

*With respect to the difficulty in which the doctrine of depravity by nature has been supposed to involve the free-agency of man, it may be remarked, that it can result only from a misapprehension of the terms. When we speak of the depravity or sinfulness of man by nature, no one, who correctly interprets the language, can understand us to mean that nature is the physical or efficient cause of sin, operating by absolute and irresistible compulsion. All that can be properly understood is, that nature is the occasion of sin, as a free act. The very nature of the predicate, sin, requires the restriction of the phrase to this import. Who ever supposes when we speak of God as by nature holy, or of angels as by nature holy, that we intend that their nature is a physical cause of which holiness is a physical effect? or imagines that we intend to assert that which every one knows would annihilate the very nature of holiness? The known nature of the predicate and common sense of the speaker forbid such an interpretation. So in the present case, the Apostle cannot be understood

to mean, nor can any one merely from using similar phraseology be properly or fairly understood to mean, that nature is a physical cause of which sin is a physical effect. The known nature of sin, the predicate, as a free act, is utterly at war with such a notion; we have a right to presume that no one can be so wanting in good sense as not to know this; or so uncandid as to suppose that we do not know it and assume it, or as to impute to us the opposite and palpably absurd view of sin. And as none ought ever to attribute flagrant absurdity to a writer or speaker whose language, according to correct usage, and just interpretation, expresses truth and good sense, (they pervert his language if they do,) they are obliged by the laws of interpretation, to understand nature in the present case, to denote simply the occasion of sin. But if nature is not a physical cause of sin, but simply the occasion of sin, then since nothing but physical influence or efficiency can be supposed in the present case to be inconsistent with moral freedom, the consistency between sinning by nature and sinning freely, is apparent. Let not an objector ask, how can even this be consistent with the moral perfection of God? He starts another objection, and one, to answer which belongs to him as well as to me. One thing then at a time; and the question now is, if nature is simply the occasion of man's sinning, why may he not sin freely? Why not, as well as if circumstances or motives were the occasion? Why not, as well as God or angels be holy by nature, and yet be free?

The Apostle then, using language as all other men use it, traces the universal depravity of men to their nature, and thus most explicitly teaches, contrary to the Arminian view, that it is not owing to circumstances. If this be not his meaning he uses language as no one else uses it, and the world, critics and all, may be safely challenged to tell what he does mean.

2. The Scriptures in many forms, teach the universal sinfulness of mankind in all the appropriate circumstances of their being.

First. They declare that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." And I need not cite passages from the word of God to show in how many forms it declares, that there is none that doeth good, no not one; that all have gone out of the way; that all depart from God and yield themselves to sin from the first moment of accountable action sinning so early, that in the figurative language of the Scriptures they are said to "go astray as soon as they be born speaking lies." Thus God in his testimony,

from the beginning to the end of it, asserts this appalling fact, the absolute uniformity of human sinfulness, throughout the world and throughout all ages. Not a solitary exception occurs. Even those who become holy through grace are not noted as exceptions, and doubtless, because the object is to describe the character which without grace, is common to all. One character then, if God's record be true, prevails with absolute unvarying uniformity, from the fall in Eden till time shall be no longer. Let the circumstances of men be what they may, the eye of God sees and the voice of God declares that "there is no difference, all are under sin." Now I ask, why is not the exception made why, without intimating a single exempt case through favourable circumstances, or tracing sin in a single instance to adverse circumstances, why through all the tribes of men, is all all sin all depravity, in all the circumstances of their existence, according to God's testimony? If then the absolute uniformity of an event proves that it is by nature, then does this uniformity of human sinfulness prove that man is depraved by nature.

Secondly. The Scriptures teach the same thing, by asserting the universal necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now I ask, how can the interposition of this Divine Agent be necessary to produce holiness in man, if light and truth and motives will do it? God send the Holy Ghost to perform a work, and declare the necessity of his mission for the purpose, when it might as well be done, were there no Holy Ghost? No, Brethren. Without the transforming grace of this Divine Agent, we are all 'dead men' for eternity. It follows therefore that man is such a being, or has such a nature that he will sin in all circumstances of his being, if God does not interpose to save.

Thirdly. The reason assigned by our Lord for the necessity of the Spirit's agency, is equally decisive "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." If the phrase "is flesh" is equivalent to the expression, is sinful, then this passage is a decisive testimony on the point under consideration. Be this however as it may, one thing is undeniable from this conversation of our Lord with Nicodemus, viz. that the first birth of a human being is an event, which involves the necessity of another birth by the Divine Spirit.-- Say if you will, that what our Lord asserts in the passage cited is, that what is by natural birth is simply a man a human being, thus intending to teach that none were the better for being born of Abraham; still our conclusion

remains, viz. to be born once, to become a human being, is to come under the necessity of being born again of the Spirit. As then we can be at no loss, concerning what it is to be born of the Spirit, it follows that to be born once, involves the certainty of sin to become a human being is to become a sinner, unless there be a second birth of the Spirit.

Fourthly. I add but one more out of many other scriptural testimonies, the express declaration of the inefficiency of all truth and motives; or of all that is called moral suasion. Saith the Apostle "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase; so then neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." But who are the men that can preach better than Paul and Apollos? Who can make the arrows of conviction thrill in the conscience, and bring the terrors of guilt and of God into the soul, as did the great Apostle of the Gentiles? Who by telling of a Savior's love, or of heavenly glories can do more to charm sin out of the human heart, than Apollos that 'eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures?' And yet Paul was nothing, and Apollos nothing, without God. Let then human eloquence do its best, (and it is not to be despised unless it be put in the place of the Holy Ghost) let the powers of oratory to persuade, to allure, to awe be exhausted; such is the nature of man, that no accents of a Saviour's love, no lifting up of the everlasting doors, no rising smoke of torment, will save a human being from the character and the condemnation of a depraved sinner.

"The transformation of apostate man _
From fool to wise, from earthly to divine, _
Is work for Him that made him."

3. I appeal to human consciousness. In making this appeal, I am aware that some may think I am not warranted. They seem to imagine, that sin in its nature and its cause, is something quite mysterious, and hidden from human discovery or comprehension. But, is this so? God charge sin upon a world of accountable subjects, provide through the blood of his Son redemption from sin, summon all on pain of his wrath to repent of and to forsake sin, foretell a judgment of sin, award to some eternal salvation from sin, and to others eternal perdition for sin in a word, give a law by which is the knowledge of sin, and not a soul of them be able to know or tell what sin is, or why he commits it!! God surely charges sin

upon the world as an intelligible reality. He charges it, in the matter and the cause of it upon human consciousness, and human consciousness must respond to the charge in a judgment going beforehand to condemnation. And if men do not know what that is, of which, if the charge of God be true, they are conscious, I beg leave to ask what do they know? What then are they conscious of? They are conscious that in all sin, they do freely and voluntarily set their hearts, their supreme affections on the world, rather than on God; they are conscious that this supreme love of the world is the fountain and source of all their other sins. They are also conscious, that they are led to set their hearts on the world by those propensities for worldly good, which belong to their nature. They know this as well as they know why they eat when they are hungry, or drink when they are thirsty. A man choose the world as his chief good, fix his whole heart upon it, and pursue it as if God were unworthy of a thought, and not know why he does so? He knows he does so, for the good there is in it, for the gratification of those natural propensities for this inferior good, which he ought to govern. He knows that it is not for want of knowledge; that it is not for want of motives to an opposite choice, that he thus makes light of God and everlasting glory. I say, he knows this, and I speak to the consciousness of all who hear me. All know, that propensities toward the good which the wealth or honour or pleasure of the world affords, that desires of happiness from this world in some form, have led them to set their heart upon it, rather than on God. Yes, yes, we all know it, and not a man of us dares deny it.

4. I appeal to facts. And here the question is, making the proper exception in respect to those whose character has been changed by grace, what is the moral history of man since the first apostasy? It begins with a brother's imbruing his hands in a brother's blood it terminates in the character that qualifies for companionship with the devil and his angels. What (the grace of God excepted) has ever been adequate to restrain man from sin? We pass by pagan nations, and merely glance at the utter inefficacy of even the miraculous interpositions of God to prevent sin and reclaim to duty. What was the character of men warned thus for a hundred and twenty years by Noah, God's commissioned servant? Its guilty millions swept to perdition by a deluge of waters, tell us. What the character of those under similar warnings, whom God destroyed by a storm of fire and brimstone on the cities of the plain? This emblem of the tempest of eternal fire, answers.

On mount Sinai God descended amid thunderings and lightnings, and with his own voice promulgated his law to the hosts of Israel; and yet as it were, in this very sanctuary of his awful presence, they made a molten calf and said 'these be thy Gods, O Israel.' In their future history, what a course of apostacies, rebellions, idolatries, amid the warnings of indignant prophets, and a series of miracles by which God shook heaven and earth, at almost every step of his providence? When all else was in vain, when prophets and holy men had been stoned and murdered for their faithfulness in reclaiming men to allegiance to their Maker, see God sending his own Son! Him, though speaking as never man spake, doing the works of God, and proving that in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead him, they nailed to the cross. Look at the persecutions that followed. See how religion doomed to the rack and the fire, stands lifting her streaming eyes to heaven, with none but God to help, how kings and emperors like tigers, can feast as it were only on Christian blood. --See how every shrine is demolished where weakness can pray, and penitence can weep how every thing is done, which human malice can invent, to blot out Christianity, name and memorial, from under heaven. And if you think that modern refinement and civilization have alleviated the picture, look at Paris in the French revolution -that city, the seat of art, of taste, of refinement, of every thing that can grace human nature short of religion, is converted as in a moment into a den of assassins, and her streets crowded with scaffolds raining blood on the gloomy processions of death, that pass beneath them.-- But we need not look to other ages or other countries. In this land on which the Sun of Righteousness sheds his clearest, brightest day here where the light of salvation, with all its motives, with all the love and grace of the Savior, with the glories of heaven and terrors of hell, is centred and poured burning and blazing upon the human heart, here in this assembly, what do we find? Assassins and highwaymen, murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers? No. But we do find, despisers of the Lord that bought them. We find every one whom grace has not made to differ, an enemy of God. And when the veil of eternity shall be drawn, and the light of eternity reveal the results when the sinner's place in hell shall be fixed and the measure of his woe be full, then shall he know what that depravity is, which now tramples under foot the Son of God and does despite unto the Spirit of grace. These are the stubborn things, called facts; facts which show how dreadful is the depravity of man under the most perfect efforts of God to prevent it; facts which show into what depths of guilt and woe, the

creature man will plunge, if the arm of grace does not hold him back; facts which show that he is depraved, not for want of light or motives, but depraved by nature. Especially, what other account can be given of the depravity which prevails, amid the splendours of Gospel day?

REMARKS.

1. It is consistent with the doctrine of this discourse, that infants should be saved through the redemption of Christ. They belong to a race who by nature and in all the appropriate circumstances of their being, will sin. The very birth of a human being is an event which involves the certainty of entire moral depravity, without the supernatural interposition of God to prevent it. Do you ask, when he will begin to sin? I answer, I do not know, the precise instant. The Scriptures do not tell us, and I can see no possible use, in saying that we do know, what it is. most palpably evident we do not know.*

*The ignorance of the writer on this point is not absolutely peculiar to himself. Says Dr. Emmons in a volume of his Sermons published in 1825, "It is certainly supposable, that children may exist in this world, some space of time, before they become moral agents; but how long that space may be, whether an hour, a day, or a month or a year, or several years, as many suppose, we do not presume to determine. But during that space, whether longer or shorter, they are not moral agents, nor consequently accountable creatures in the sight of God or man." p. 257.

President Edwards, speaking of the commencement of actual sin in men, expresses himself thus, they "commit sin immediately without any time intervening after they are capable of understanding their obligation to God and reflecting on themselves;" "no considerable time passes after men are capable of acting for themselves as the subjects of God's law, before they are guilty of sin; because if the time were considerable, it would be great enough to deserve to be taken notice of." Works, Vol. VI, p. 161.

The reader will perceive that the views of the writer, respecting the point of time when men first commit sin, are to say the least not more indefinite than those of Dr. Emmons and President Edwards.

Is it then said, that we sin before we are born? But there is no such thing as sinning without acting; and an Apostle has told us of two infants, who,

while "not yet born" had done "neither good nor evil." Do you say they begin to sin at their birth? But some knowledge of duty is requisite to sin, and we know, for the inspired historian has told us, of some children who had "no knowledge between good and evil." Do you say it must be so, for they die and death among human beings proves sin. But children die before they are born, and perhaps also some children die who have no knowledge between good and evil. Do you say they are proper subjects of baptism, and this proves sin. How do you know, that baptism is not administered to infants simply as a seal of the covenant, exhibiting and ratifying its promises of good respecting them? Do you say, the language of the Scriptures, is universal, that all have sinned. The language too is universal, that we are to "preach the Gospel to every creature." Of course, if your mode of interpretation is right, we are to preach the Gospel to infants, and to animals also! to every creature.

Instead then of attempting to assign the precise instant in which men begin to sin, we choose to say they sin as soon as they become moral agents they sin as soon as they can; and who will affirm that this is not soon enough? If it be asked how soon, can they sin? I answer very early; even so early, that they are justly represented as sinning from their youth and in the figurative language of the scriptures, from their birth, and even before birth; so early that the literal interval, if there be such an interval, between birth and the commencement of sin is either so short or unimportant, that the Spirit of inspiration has not thought it worthy of particular notice.

If then you ask, what becomes of an infant if he dies, while yet an infant? I answer, he may be saved; in my belief he is saved, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. If you ask, how can this be? I reply, he belongs to a race who by nature, in all the circumstances of their immortal being without the grace of this redemption, will sin. Place an infant then from his birth under the influence of the most perfect example and instructions, yea place him amid heaven's purity and heaven's songs, and who shall say that he will not, without the supernatural grace of God's Spirit, be a depraved sinner and fall under condemnation? When made meet therefore for the celestial paradise and admitted there, his song may tell of the grace that brought him to its glories.

2. That sin or guilt pertains exclusively to voluntary action, is the true principle of orthodoxy. We have seen that the older orthodox divines

assert this principle, and that they abundantly deny that God is the creator or author of sin. By some strange fatality however these writers, are not believed by many, on these points; and we are told, as the ground for discrediting these unequivocal declarations, that they also constantly affirm that men are born with a corrupt and sinful nature, and with guilt upon them. True, very true. But now to the real question how in the view of these writers, does this nature with which they are born become corrupt and sinful? By being so created? No such thing: for this they constantly and vehemently deny; and give as we have seen this reason for denying it, that it would make God the author of sin. How then is it, that in their view each has a corrupt and sinful nature when born, and yet that God does not create it? Why, by the real act of each by each one's corrupting his nature, just as Adam did his. But how can this be? They tell us how; viz. that Adam and his posterity were in God's estimation and were thus truly constituted, One Being, one Moral Whole; so that in Adam's act of sin, all his posterity being One with him, also acted as truly as Adam himself; and so, each and all corrupted their nature as freely and voluntarily as Adam corrupted his nature. The question is, not whether this is not very absurd, but what did these men believe and teach? And I say they did believe and did teach that all Adam's posterity acted in his act, sinned in him and fell with him, and are considered truly and properly as sinning in manner and form, just as Adam sinned; and every one who has read his catechism or his primer must know it This class of divines then never thought of predicating sin or guilt, except in cases of free voluntary action. So far as they are concerned therefore the doctrine of physical depravity is a theological novelty.

The history of this peculiarity, shows the same thing. The process has been this. The doctrine of imputation being rejected, as it has been in New England for many years, and with it our personal identity with Adam, there was no way left in which we could be viewed as the older divines viewed us; the criminal authors when born, of our own corrupt and sinful nature. Still the doctrine of a corrupt and sinful nature as such has been retained by some, and thus what the older divines made every man as one in Adam the author of, God must now answer for as its author by a creative act. Hence some have so professed and so preached, and have talked much of their own orthodoxy and of the heresy of others, and yet after all the outcry, not a theological writer of eminence has ventured to this hour to publish to the world such a doctrine. The entire annals of

orthodoxy do not contain the doctrine that God creates a sinful nature in man. Those men who have fought the battles of orthodoxy from the reformation to the present day, and who have been esteemed its successful defenders, have held most firmly and asserted abundantly, that all sin or fault must belong to the acts of the mind to the evil will, or belong to nothing at all. Brethren, were these men heretics for this? Is the man who believes and teaches the same thing, a heretic?*

*So far as the views of the Orthodox are understood, it would seem that we are reduced to the alternative of renouncing orthodoxy on this subject, in every supposable form of it, or of adopting some one of the following forms; either that Adam's posterity are One And The Same Being with Adam, and so guilty of his first sin by sinning in him, or that God creates in us a sinful nature or something else, which deserves his wrath, or that at the very moment of birth we sin with the knowledge of duty and as voluntary transgressors of known law, or that we sin without the knowledge of right and wrong even in the lowest degree or that as free moral agents, we sin knowingly and voluntarily when we become capable of thus sinning. Those who reject all these specific forms of the doctrine of depravity, must relinquish even the pretence to orthodoxy on this topic, and those who reject the last form of it, and adopt either of the preceeding forms, will it is hoped favor the world with some better arguments on the subject than have hitherto been furnished."

3. The view of sin or moral depravity maintained in this discourse, cannot be justly ascribed to mental perversion, or to any sinister or selfish design. For, what possible motive or object, can be assigned as the cause of perverting truth and evidence in such a case? If popularity were the object, the charges of having departed from the true faith by renouncing former opinions, repeated from one end of the land to the other, show at least in respect to some of us, how ill-judged has been this expedient to gain popularity. Nor is this view of sin adopted for the sake of rejecting any one doctrine of orthodoxy, or of setting up any anti-orthodox peculiarity. For, they who adopt this view, as fully believe in the certainty of the universal and entire sinfulness of mankind they as fully believe this sinfulness or depravity to be by nature they as fully believe in the inefficacy of moral suasion and in the necessity of the Holy Spirit's agency in regeneration, as any other men. They no more deny that infants are sinners from their birth, that infants are saved through Christ, nor that they must become holy (if at all) by divine influence, than other

men. And although they do deny that God creates the sin in them, and that sin pertains to any thing but voluntary action, yet the denial of either position is not an anti-orthodox peculiarity, for the ablest orthodox divines have ever denied both. The charge then of adopting this view of sin, for the purpose of opposing any doctrine of orthodoxy, is a slanderous charge.

Can any cause then of mental perversion be fairly charged? The human mind pervert truth and evidence for the sake of believing that to be sin, which as it is agreed on all hands, imparts to sin its most malignant aspect, and reveals its fullest tendencies? Men believe that to be sin, which deserves the deepest damnation which any thing can deserve, merely because they wish to believe it! You may as well suppose that for a similar reason, a man should believe his doom already fixed in hell itself. If there be any view of sin which human selfishness will resist to the last, it is this which so embodies all its guilt and all its terrors; it is this which as we all know, makes the conscience of the wicked writhe in anguish, and an ungodly world hate the servant as it hated the Master whom it crucified. Such a view of sin, is not a device to obtain popularity, nor to corrupt the Gospel of God.

4. The universal depravity of mankind is not inconsistent with the moral perfection of God. It is not uncommon to ask, (and I admit the facts on which the objection rests) how could a God of perfect sincerity and goodness bring a race of creatures into existence, and give them such a nature that they will all certainly sin and incur his wrath? It is also added, to increase the weight of the objection, why render this universal sinfulness of a race, the consequence of one man's act why not give to each a fair trial for himself? I answer, God does give to each a fair trial for himself. Not a human being does or can become thus sinful or depraved but by his own choice. God does not compel him to sin by the nature he gives him. Nor is his sin, although a consequence of Adam's sin, in such a sense its consequence, as not to be a free voluntary act of his own. He sins freely, voluntarily. There is no other way of sinning. God, (there is no irreverence in saying it,) can make nothing else sin, but the sinner's act. Do you then say, that God gave man a nature, which He knew would lead him to sin? What if He did? Do you know that God could have done better, better on the whole or better, if he gave him existence at all, even for the individual himself? The error lies in the gratuitous assumption, that

God could have adopted a moral system, and prevented all sin, or at least, the present degree of sin. For, no man knows this no man can prove it. The assumption therefore is wholly unauthorised as the basis of the present objection, and the objection itself groundless. On the supposition that the evil which exists is in respect to divine prevention, incidental to the best possible system, and that notwithstanding the evil, God will secure the greatest good possible to him to secure, who can impeach either his wisdom or his goodness because evil exists? I say then that as ignorance is incompetent to make an objection, and as no one knows that this supposition is not a matter of fact, no one has a right to assert the contrary, or even to think it.*

*The difficulties on this difficult subject as it is extensively regarded, result in the view of the writer from two very common but groundless assumptions assumptions which so long as they are admitted and reasoned upon, must leave the subject involved in insuperable difficulties.

The assumptions are these; First, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good and as such, so far as it exists, is preferable on the whole to holiness in its stead. Secondly, that God could in a moral system have prevented all sin or at least the present degree of sin.

In further explanation of the ground taken in answering the above objection, the following enquiries are submitted to the consideration of the candid.

Is not the assumption that the degree of sin which exists, or even any degree of sin, is on the whole preferable to holiness in its stead, inconsistent alike with the benevolence and the sincerity of God? With his benevolence. If such be the nature of God, of man, of holiness, of sin, of all things, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, ought it not to be made the subject of precept would it not be, by a benevolent moral Governor? For how can it be consistent with the benevolence of a moral governor, to require of his subjects that moral conduct which is not on the whole for the best?

If it be said that it is on the whole for the best that he should require it, but not on the whole for the best that they should perform it what is this but to say that it is on the whole for the best that he should practice deception on his subjects? And what then becomes of his sincerity? Let us take an

example or two. Who would regard the command of a parent as sincere, it being known that he prefers on the whole the disobedience of the child to his obedience? Who would regard the invitation of a friend as sincere, being fully apprised that he prefers on the whole its rejection to its acceptance? If it be said that no subjects of God have such knowledge of God's preference of sin to holiness in their own case, then the question is whether their ignorance alters the fact; and whether he is truly sincere, when he would be justly pronounced insincere if the real fact were known? Besides, after the commission of sin, the fact of such a preference, if there be one, is known. How then does the sincerity of God appear when it is placed beyond a doubt by the event, that he did prefer on the whole, the sin committed by the subject to the holiness required in his law? Is it then possible that God should be sincere in his commands and invitations, unless holiness in man be on the whole preferable to sin in its stead?

Further, it is extensively maintained that virtue is founded in utility, i. e. that such is the nature, relations and tendencies of things, that greater happiness will result from virtue or holiness than from vice or sin. How then can sin in the nature of things be the necessary means of the greatest good?

Again, if sin be the necessary means of the greatest good, who can reasonably regard the commission of it with sorrow or even regret? What benevolent being duly informed, can ingenuously regret that by sin he has put it in the power of God to produce greater good, than God could otherwise produce? Ought it not rather to be matter of grateful praise that he has sinned, and thus furnished, by what he has done, the necessary means of the greatest possible good? Surely the act considered simply in the relation of the necessary means of such an end, is not a matter for regret; this being the very reason, why God himself is supposed to prefer it.

Is it then said, that the intention is selfish and sinful? Be it so. Had the subject however been fully apprised of the utility of the deed, and the real preference of God, (as in the case of the destruction of the Canaanites,) his own interest and his duty would have been coincident; and how does it appear that in this case he had not performed the act from a benevolent intention? And how great is the guilt of a selfish intention which, for aught that appears, is occasioned by deception on the part of the lawgiver? Is it

said that the selfish intention is necessary to the action as the means of good? But where is an instance in which the good educed from a sinful action is dependent on the selfish intention of the agent? Is it said, that otherwise God could not shew mercy in its forgiveness? Does God then deceive his subjects in regard to the true nature and tendency of moral acts, and thus occasion their sin that he may have the glory of forgiving it? Is this the glory of his mercy? Besides, how does it appear that the subject did not really intend good? The law of God, according to the assumption, is no proof that transgression is not on the whole for the best; indeed the subject knows that all sin will prove to be the necessary means of the greatest good; how then does it appear that with this knowledge he was not truly benevolent in performing the deed? What reason then for sorrow or regret remains?

The second assumption now claims our notice; viz. that God could have prevented all sin, or at least the present degree of sin, in a moral system.

Suppose then God had adopted a different system, who is competent to foretell or to conjecture the results, or even the results of one iota of change in the present system? Suppose God had made you just like Adam or even like Lucifer, and placed you in similar circumstances, do you know that you would not have sinned as he did? How do you know that had you commenced your immortal career with such aggravated guilt, God would not have found it necessary to send you to hell without an offer of mercy, and that you would not have sunk in deeper woe than that which now awaits you? How do you know that what might have been true respecting yourself, had not been true of any other possible system of accountable beings? How do you know, that had God ordered things otherwise than he has, this very world now cheered with the calls of mercy and brightened with the hopes of eternal life, yea that heaven itself would not now be trembling under the thunders of retributive vengeance? Man, man in his ignorance, alter the plan and procedure of his God! How dare he think of it? Beware, ye insects of a day, ye are judging Him "whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain."

If holiness in a moral system be preferable on the whole to sin in its stead, why did not a benevolent God, were it possible to him, prevent all sin, and secure the prevalence of universal holiness? Would not a moral universe of perfect holiness, and of course of perfect happiness, be happier and better than one comprising sin and its miseries? And must

not infinite benevolence accomplish all the good it can? Would not a benevolent God then, had it been possible to him in the nature of things, have secured the existence of universal holiness in his moral kingdom?

Is the reader startled by an enquiry which seems to limit the power of God? But does not he equally limit the power of God by supposing, or rather affirming, that God Could Not secure the greatest good without the existence of sin? On either supposition there is what may be called a limitation of the power of God by the nature of things. In one case, the limitation is supposed to result from the nature of sin; in the other, from the nature of moral agency. If then one of these suppositions must be made, which is the most honourable to God?

Further, does not he who is startled by this supposition, limit the goodness of God? Undeniably he does, if it be conceded that holiness is on the whole preferable to sin in its stead. For he who admits this, and maintains that God could have secured the existence of holiness instead of sin, must also admit that God is not good enough to accomplish all the good in his power; not good enough to prevent the worst of evils. And who does most reverence to God, he who supposes that God would have prevented all sin in his moral universe, but could not, or he who affirms that he could have prevented it, but would not? Or is it more honourable to God to suppose that such is the nature of sin, that he could not accomplish the highest good without it, than to suppose that such is the nature of free agency that God could not wholly prevent its perversion?

But the main enquiry on this point remains, does the supposition that God could not prevent sin in a moral system, limit his power at all? To suppose or affirm that God cannot perform what is impossible in the nature of things, is not properly to limit his power. Is there then the least particle of evidence, that the entire prevention of sin in moral beings is possible to God in the nature of things? If not, then what becomes of the very common assumption of such possibility?

All evidence of the truth of this assumption must be derived either from the nature of the subject, or from known facts. Is there such evidence from the nature of the subject? It is here to be remarked, that the prevention of sin by any influence that destroys the power to sin, destroys moral agency. Moral agents then must possess the power to sin. Who then can prove a priori or from the nature of the subject, that a being who

Can sin, will Not sin? How can it be proved a priori or from the nature of the subject, that a thing will not be, when for aught that appears, it may be? On this point, is it presumptuous to bid defiance to the powers of human reason?

Is there any evidence from facts? Facts, so far as they are known to us, furnish no support to the assumption, that God could in a moral system prevent all sin, or even the present degree of sin. For we know of no creature of God, whose holiness is secured without that influence which results either directly or indirectly, from the existence of sin and its punishment. How then can it be shown from facts, that God could secure any of his moral creatures in holiness, without this influence; or to what purpose is it to allege instances of the prevention of sin under this influence, to prove that God could prevent it without this influence? Rather, do not all known facts furnish a strong presumption to the contrary? If God could prevent all sin without this influence, why has he not done it? Be this however as it may, since God has not, so far as we know, prevented sin in a single instance without this influence, how can it be proved from facts, that he could have prevented all sin, or even the present degree of sin in a moral system? Had his creatures done what they could, then indeed there had been more holiness and less sin. But the question is, what could God have done to secure such a result? Had he prevented the sins of one human being to the present time, or had he brought to repentance one sinner more than he has, who can prove that the requisite interposition for the purpose, would not result in a vast increase of sin in the system, including even the apostacy and augmented guilt of that individual? In a word, who is competent to foretell, or authorised even to surmise the consequences of the least iota of change in the present system of influence to produce holiness and prevent sin? If no one, then all assumptions on the subject, like that under consideration, are wholly unwarranted. It may be true, that God will secure under the present system of things, the greatest degree of holiness and the least degree of sin, which it is possible to him in the nature of things to secure. Neither the nature of the subject, nor known facts, furnish a particle of evidence to the contrary. The assumption therefore, that God could in a moral system have prevented all sin or the present degree of sin, is wholly gratuitous and unauthorised, and ought never to be made the basis of an objection or an argument.

As an apology for this note, the writer would say that the objection alluded to in the discourse, so commonly rises in the mind in connexion with the subject, that it was thought proper to notice it; and while he knows of no refutation except the one given, he was desirous of attempting still further to free the subject from distressing and groundless perplexity. This is done in his own view, simply by dismissing from the mind the two assumptions which have been examined. The mode in which the mind will in this way, be led to view the character and government of God may, it is believed, be shown to be shown to be free from embarrassment by an example.

Suppose then the father of several sons to have foreknown with minute accuracy the various propensities and tendencies of their nature, and all the possible conditions or circumstances in which he might place them, with all the results of each condition. Suppose him also to foresee with absolute certainty, that to place them at a public seminary, although he knows it will be, unavoidably to himself, attended with a temporary course of vice on their part, will nevertheless result in greater good than he can secure by placing them in any other condition or circumstances. Suppose it to be true, and known to him, that their uniform good conduct at the seminary would be far better on the whole or in every respect than their misconduct. Suppose him now to send them at the proper age, to the place of their education with solemn and unqualified injunctions of uniform good conduct; and all the results to be as foreseen. Now can the procedure of this father be impeached in any respect whatever? Does he not evince wisdom and benevolence in every part of it? Does he not evince the most absolute and perfect sincerity in his injunctions of right conduct? Does he not at the same time furnish by what he does, adequate and decisive ground for acquiescence in view of the incidental evil; and is there not equally decisive ground for repentance to his disobedient children in what they do? If these things are so in the procedure of this father, why are they not so in the procedure of God?

Now think of this, fellow sinner. God in adopting the present system with all the sin incidental to it, may have adopted the best possible. In giving to you the nature which he has, and in placing you in the circumstances in which he has, he may have done the best he could even for you. Say then is your existence a curse, for which your Maker is to be reproached? Is it a curse at all, unless you make it so? Does not his preference of

holiness to sin on your part, evince toward you, perfect benevolence? Listen to his calls and entreaties and say if this is not the voice of sincerity and truth. Listen to his oath, 'that he has no pleasure at all in your death,' and say if he would regret your return to duty and to life? Look around you and see what proofs of love, what intimations of grace and glory provided for you, gladden every moment of your being. Think what God has done to save you; how he has laid his wrath on one for your sake, how he has cleared away the darkness and tempest around his throne and with smiles of mercy invites you to himself, how he bade angels sing in rapturous song "good will" to the guilty and the lost how under his commission the swift messenger bears these tidings to you and to all, how mercy with tears points you to that crown of life how God himself with the earnestness of a suppliant father, with the sincerity of a God entreats you to receive his great salvation. Say now, is he not good; is he not sincere? What 'child of wrath,' will not trust in such a God to save him?

The writer hopes he shall not be charged without proof, with denying what he fully believes that the providential purposes or decrees of God extend to all actual events, sin not excepted. God may really purpose the existence of sin, whether he purpose it for one reason or for another; he may, as the example shows, as really purpose sin though wholly an evil, considered as incidental, so far as his power of prevention is concerned, to the best moral system, as purpose it considered as so excellent in its nature and relations as to be the necessary means of the greatest good. And while the theory now proposed exhibits the providential government of God as the basis of submission, confidence, and joy, under all the evils that befall his dependent creatures; it also presents, as no other theory in the view of the writer does present, the Moral Government of God in its unimpaired perfection and glory, to deter from sin and allure to holiness his accountable subjects.

5. We see the importance of this view of man's depravity, compared with any other, in its bearing on the preaching of the Gospel. To what purpose, do we preach the Gospel to men, if we cannot reach the conscience with its charge of guilt and obligations to duty? And how I ask can this be done, unless sin and duty be shown to consist simply and wholly in acts and doings which are their own? Can this be done if we tell them and they believe us, that their sin is something which God creates in them; or

something done by Adam thousands of years before they existed? I care not what you call it, taste, disposition, volition, exercise, if it be that which cannot be unless God creates it, and cannot but be if he exerts his power to produce it, can we fasten the arrows of conviction in the conscience, and settle on the spirit the forebodings of a merited damnation? Can men be induced to make an effort to avoid sin which is thus produced in them, or to perform duties which must with the same passivity on their part, be produced in them? Does God charge on men, as that which deserves his endless indignation, what Himself does? Does God summon men to repentance with commands and entreaties, and at the same time tell them, that all efforts at compliance are as useless, as the muscular motions of a corpse to get life again? Does this book of God's inspiration, shock and appall the world, with the revelation of such things, respecting God and respecting man? Will the charge of such sin on man, touch the secret place of tears? Will the exhibition of such a God, allure the guilty to confide in his mercy. If so, preach it out preach it consistently, preach nothing to contradict it, dwell on your message, that God creates men sinners and damns them for being so. Tell them such is their nature and such the mode of his interposition, that there is no more hope from acting on the part of the sinner than from not acting; tell them they may as well sleep on, and sleep away these hours of mercy, as attempt anything in the work of their salvation; that all is as hopeless with effort as without it. Spread over this world such a curtain of sackcloth, such a midnight of terror, and how as the appropriate effect, would each accountable immortal, either sit down in the sullenness of inaction, or take his solitary way to hell in the frenzy of despair!

But such is not the message of wrath and of mercy, by which a revolted world is to be awed and allured back to its Maker. The message we are to deliver to men is a message of wrath, because they are the perpetrators of the deed that deserves wrath. It is a message of mercy to men who by acting, are to comply with the terms of it, and who can never hope to comply even through God's agency, without putting themselves to the doing of the very thing commanded of God.-- And it is only by delivering such a message, that we, Brethren, can be "workers together with God." Let us then go forth with it; and clearing God, throw all the guilt of sin with its desert of wrath, upon the sinner's single self. Let us make him see and feel that he can go to hell only as a self-destroyer that it is this fact, that will give those chains their strength to hold him, and those

fires the anguish of their burning. Let us if we can, make this conviction take hold of his spirit, and ring in his conscience like the note of the second death. If he trembles at the sound in his ears, then let us point him to that mercy which a dying Jesus feels for him, and tell him with the sympathies of men who have been in the same condemnation, that he need but to love and trust Him, and heaven is his inheritance. Without derogating from the work of God's Spirit let us urge him to his duty to his duty to his duty, as a point-blank direction to business now on hand and now to be done. With the authorised assurance that 'peradventure God may give him repentance,' let us make known to him the high command of God "strive to enter in at the strait gate" and make him hear every voice of truth and mercy in heaven and on earth, echoing the mandate.

Then shall the ministers of reconciliation be clad with truth as with a garment, and delivering their message not only in its substance but in its true manner and form, shall commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Having his strength perfected in their weakness, they shall go forth 'as archangels strong,' and bidding the wide earth receive God's salvation, the bands of hell shall break, and a redeemed world return to the dominion of its God.

Finally,-- I cannot conclude without remarking, how fearful are the condition and prospects of the sinner. His sin is his own. He yields himself by his own free act, by his own choice, to those propensities of his nature, which under the weight of God's authority he ought to govern. The gratification of these he makes his chief good, immortal as he is. For this he lives and acts this he puts in the place of God and for this, and for nothing better he tramples on God's authority and incurs his wrath. Glad would he be, to escape the guilt of it. Oh could he persuade himself that the fault is not his own, this would wake up peace in his guilty bosom. Could he believe that God is bound to convert and save him; or even that he could make it certain that God will do it, this would allay his fears, this would stamp a bow on the cloud that thickens, and darkens, and thunders damnation on his guilty path. But his guilt is all his own, and a just God may leave him to his choice. He is going on to a wretched eternity, the self-made victim of its woes. Amid sabbaths and bibles, the intercessions of saints, the songs of angels, the intreaties of God's ambassadors, the accents of redeeming love, and the blood that speaketh peace, he presses on to death. God beseeching with

tenderness and terror Jesus telling him he died once and could die again to save him mercy weeping over him day and night heaven lifting up its everlasting gates hell burning, and sending up its smoke of torment, and the weeping and the wailing and the gnashing of teeth, within his hearing, and onward still he goes.-- See the infatuated immortal! Fellow sinner, It is YOU.

Bowels of divine compassion length, breadth, height, depth of Jesus' love Spirit of all grace, save him Oh save him or he dies forever.

END.